

### AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows. Deletions are shown in ~~strikeout~~ text; additions are underlined.

Please cancel Claim 11 without prejudice.

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for securing an auxiliary device to a tracheostomy tube, the apparatus comprising:

a ring having a pair of opposed extensions defining primary strap holds, and further having a pair of secondary strap holds;

a void within the ring configured to allow passage of a tracheostomy tube through the ring, the ring extensions extending away from the void; and

a pair of auxiliary device straps affixed to each of the secondary strap holds, the auxiliary straps configured so that, when the tracheostomy tube extends through the ring void, the auxiliary straps extend around an auxiliary device that is fit onto the tracheostomy tube so as to maintain a maximum spatial relationship between the auxiliary device and the ring.

2. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the auxiliary device straps are configured with fastening elements to releasably secure the auxiliary device straps together.

3. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 2, wherein the fastening elements comprise hook and loop fasteners.

4. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of Claim 1, in further combination with a tracheostomy collar having a neck strap and wherein the neck strap engages the ring so that the ring is secured to the tracheostomy collar by the neck strap.

5. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein the neck strap comprises an elongate member that simultaneously connects to the tracheostomy collar and extends through the ring primary strap holds.

6. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the ring has a major axis extending between the primary strap holds and a minor axis extending between the secondary strap holds, and the major axis is greater than the minor axis.

7. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the primary strap holds are spaced farther apart than the secondary strap holds.

8. (Currently Amended) A method of securing an auxiliary device to a flanged tracheostomy tube, comprising the steps of:

providing a flanged tracheostomy tube;

providing an auxiliary device;

providing a tracheostomy collar having an elongate neck strap, the flanged tracheostomy tube comprising opposed neck strap holds configured to accommodate the neck strap;

providing a retainer configured to fit over the tracheostomy tube, the retainer having a retainer strap configured for releasable engagement with the auxiliary device, and further having two or more primary strap holds configured to receive the neck strap;

fitting the retainer over the tracheostomy tube;

securing the neck strap to the flanged tracheostomy tube neck strap holds and simultaneously to the retainer primary strap holds, thereby securing the retainer to the tracheostomy tube;

engaging the auxiliary device with the tracheostomy tube; and

securing the retainer to the auxiliary device with the retainer strap.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 8, wherein the tracheostomy tube strap holds comprise slots, and the elongate neck strap passes through the slots on the tracheostomy tube and also passes through the primary strap holds on the retainer.

10. (Original) The method of Claim 8, wherein the securing the retainer to the auxiliary device step comprises fastening a pair of retainer straps having a hook and loop fastening closure around the auxiliary device.

11. Cancelled

Please add the following new claims:

12. (New) An apparatus for securing an auxiliary device to a tracheostomy tube, the apparatus comprising:

a ring having an aperture, a pair of opposed primary strap holds, and a pair of secondary strap holds; and

a pair of auxiliary device straps affixed to each of the secondary strap holds, the auxiliary straps configured so that, when the tracheostomy tube extends through the ring void, the auxiliary straps can extend around an auxiliary device that is fit onto the tracheostomy tube so as to maintain a maximum spatial relationship between the auxiliary device and the ring;

wherein a tube accepting portion of the aperture is shaped to generally correspond to a tracheostomy tube so as to allow passage of a tracheostomy tube through the ring; and

wherein the ring is configured so that a space is defined between each primary strap hold and the tube accepting portion of the aperture so that a strap can be fit onto each of the primary strap holds when the tube accepting portion of the aperture is occupied by a tracheostomy tube.

13. (New) The apparatus of Claim 12, wherein the primary strap holds are each defined by a primary strap hold aperture formed through the ring.

14. (New) The apparatus of Claim 12, wherein the tube accepting portion of the aperture and the primary strap holds are defined by a single aperture formed through the ring.

15. (New) The apparatus of Claim 14, wherein the single aperture comprises a major axis and a minor axis, the major axis being greater than the minor axis, and the primary holds are disposed along the major axis.

16. (New) The apparatus of Claim 15, wherein the primary holds comprise a generally flat surface configured to accommodate a strap.

17. (New) The apparatus of Claim 14, wherein the ring aperture has an inside surface, and the major strap holds are defined by indentations formed in the inside surface.

18. (New) A tracheostomy tube apparatus, comprising:

a tracheostomy tube having a flange, the flange having a major axis and a minor axis, the major axis being greater than the minor axis, and a pair of collar apertures are disposed along the major axis;

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a collar comprising a strap adapted to fit about a wearer's neck and adapted to fit through the collar apertures; and

an auxiliary device securement apparatus as recited in Claim 12;

wherein the collar strap is fit through the collar apertures and the ring primary strap holds so as to secure the ring relative to the flange.

19. (New) The apparatus of Claim 18, wherein the ring has a major axis and a minor axis, the ring minor axis being no greater than the flange minor axis.

20. (New) The apparatus of Claim 19, wherein the ring major axis is greater than the ring minor axis.